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Fafon  
Q of '75

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October MCMXXIX

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ILLUSTRATIONS

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# DRAMA

VOL. VIII

OCTOBER MCMXXIX

NUMBER 10

THE JOURNAL OF THE BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE

## SOME RECENT PLAYS

By G. W. Bishop

MR. SHAW has conquered at last. No other dramatist could shift the interest first to Warsaw and then in the middle of August to a select health resort in the West of England. Who else could get all the dramatic critics of England out of bed so early on a Sunday morning? As a matter of fact they enjoyed themselves, although from certain notices in the papers, it might have been thought that some of them had a gloomy day. It is late to talk about "The Apple Cart" when so much has already been said. By the time these notes are in print the play will have been seen in Birmingham and have been transferred to London. But one aspect seems to have been overlooked in most of the articles: the entertainment value of the play. Personally I feel that my colleagues have taken it all too seriously. The author has many profound things to say and, in the character of King Magnus has expressed his deep (but not unsuspected) love for England, but he has also set out with the deliberate intention of being amusing. The fact that an audience laughed for three hours at Mr. Shaw's witty dialogue seems to me sufficient evidence that he succeeded. He may be seriously concerned with the future of democracy. More likely, he is anxious to upset the notion that political labels are more important than people—an "apple cart" that needs to be upset—so he put up an Aunt Sally of a Cabinet. It has now been disclosed that the members of the Cabinet were put into fancy dress to meet the requirements of the Lord Chamberlain. The second act has been criticised as having nothing to do with the play, but

it seems to me to have great dramatic value. Without that interlude the King would live in the mind only as a politician. The scene with Orinthia completes his portrait as a human being; it shows him, as it were, "off duty" and sets the first and last acts in high relief. Incidentally, the scene is an opportunity for twenty minutes of fine acting from Miss Edith Evans. One might describe "The Apple Cart" as a boisterously witty and fantastic farce on a political theme. It is shapeless, the three acts do not hang together, it contains the longest speech in any modern play—and it is a work of genius. Ask the actors if they prefer the well-made conventional society drama to Mr. Shaw? Ask Mr. Cedric Hardwicke, who plays the King, and incidentally gives a performance of great charm and extraordinary interest, and one that is on the intellectual plane of the author's creation.

The two other productions that call for particular notice in the last two months are Mr. Noel Coward's operetta, "Bitter Sweet," and Mr. St. John Ervine's comedy, "The First Mrs. Fraser." The former will more than likely upset the accepted notions of a satisfactory musical "show." It is possible that audiences will call for graceful lyrics, better dialogue and less hackneyed music in their musical comedies in the future. There are several tedious scenes, but the second act, which ends so finely on a tragic note, is vivid with life and interest. The scenery is delightful and the dresses a constant joy; and Miss Peggy Wood, from America, can act as well as sing.

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## SOME RECENT PLAYS

"The First Mrs. Fraser" at the Haymarket brought back Mr. Henry Ainley to the stage, and gives Miss Marie Tempest the best part she has had for years. It is also a witty, dexterously handled comedy that finishes as well as it begins. Mr. Ervine is a real craftsman of the theatre. He has written a number of plays, any one of which is better than many pieces that have made fortunes, and at last he is reaping the reward of his art as a dramatist. "Mrs. Fraser" will shortly be seen in America and also in half-a-dozen theatres in Europe.

It was really a disservice to the memory of Thomas Hardy to revive "Tess of the D'Urbervilles," which is just finishing at the Duke of York's. The revivals of "The Father" and "Sun-up" reminded us of two really first-rate performances by Mr. Robert Loraine and Miss Lucille La Verne. The production of "These Pretty Things," by Miss Gertrude Jennings, has not enhanced by the famous one-act play writer's reputation; on the other hand, another farce, "The Middle Watch," at the Shaftesbury, is really funny mainly because it is so efficiently presented by the actors.

## STRATFORD-ON-AVON MEMORIAL THEATRE

AS a record of the laying of the Foundation Stone of the new Memorial Theatre at Stratford-upon-Avon, which took place on July 2nd, we can do no better than print here the words with which Lord Burnham requested the M.W. Pro-Grand Master of the Freemasons of England, Lord Amphill, to perform the rite according to the ancient usage of the Masonic tradition. The whole scene was an impressive one, and the contrast which it offered to most events of the kind fully justified the Memorial Committee in invoking the assistance of Masonic ceremonial.

Lord Burnham said:

"It falls to my lot, as President of this humane and world-wide foundation, to ask your lordship on behalf of my Council to perform the ceremony of laying the foundation stone of our new National Theatre according to the consecrated usage of English life and Masonic tradition. We esteem it a high honour to have this done and we do not believe that it will be as an 'unsubstantial pageant faded,' but will have its appointed place in the Shakespeare annals.

"Our American friends have made and implemented their claim to be co-heirs of Shakespeare's glory by making a splendid contribution to the joint enterprise, for which we give them much thanks. Assuredly they have been 'more than kin,' and not 'less than kind.' This

is a beautiful site and a beautiful scene—Shakespeare never forgot his 'woody Warwickshire.' The Theatre and the historian, though in London town, were still 'in the fields' and wild flowers could be gathered within a stone's throw of the doors of the place where Her Majesty's players were performing. So it is here, as it is fit and meet it should be. In the Royal Licence of 1603 issued to William Shakespeare and his fellow actors James I, of learned memory, asked that 'they should be allowed such further courtesies as hath been given to men of their place and qualities, and also that further favour you shall show to them our servants for our sake we shall take kindly at your hands.' Our gracious Sovereign King George, happily in renewed health, sits on King James' throne, and as our royal Patron, who granted a Charter to us six months before the fire destroyed the old theatre, commands us all in like fashion. May we hope that this place may be in the heart of England, a temple of concord and conciliation between the nations of the world, not unworthy of the name of Shakespeare. If so, the credit is wholly due to your eminent and beloved citizens, Mr. and Mrs. Archibald Flower, and those who, in some degree, have shared their devoted and patriotic enthusiasm."

# SIR RICHARD STEELE

By Maisie Spens

THERE falls on the first of this month the bicentenary of the death of Sir Richard Steele—an anniversary which will doubtless bring forth not a few tributes to his vivid, contradictory, and yet lovable and attractive personality. "An Englishman born in Dublin" in 1672, Steele was many things by turn—Charterhouse schoolboy, Christ Church student, Merton postmaster, soldier, gazetteer, lover, essayist, man about town, intimate friend of *littérateurs* and wits, patriot, politician and pamphleteer—but strictly limited space compels us here to consider him solely as wholeheartedly enthusiastic lover of the drama.

It was by a strange chance that the man who was afterwards to become dramatic author, patron and critic and eventually theatrical manager, was first led to woo the Comic Muse. While still a young soldier he wrote in 1701 "for my own private use. . . with a design principally to fix upon my own mind a strong impression of virtue and religion, in opposition to a stronger propensity towards unwarrantable pleasures," a manual of devotion called "The Christian Hero." This book brought upon him the slight and ridicule of his fellow-soldiers, and so he felt it "incumbent upon me to enliven my character, for which reason I write the comedy called 'The Funeral,' in which (tho' full of incidents that move laughter) virtue and vice appear just as they ought to do." Thus it was that he embarked upon a lifelong connection with the theatre.

"The Funeral," starring—as we moderns say—Mrs. Verbruggen, Mrs. Oldfield, Wilks and Colley Cibber, was acted at the Theatre Royal in Drury Lane in either November or December, 1701. A success, this play was followed up by three other comedies: "The Lying Lover; or, The Ladies' Friendship," produced in December, 1703; "The Tender Husband; or, The Accomplished Fools" produced in April, 1705, and after a very long interval, "The Conscious Lovers"—originally to have been entitled "The Unfashionable Lovers"—acted at Drury

Lane in November, 1722. All these comedies show the same profoundly individual characteristics: they are monuments of moral courage, revealing originality, real—if comparatively sparse—wit, and a genuine gift for characterization; but lacking inventiveness, polish and charm of language. Comedy was not, for Steele, the outlet of a creative spirit, for he was usually constrained—though making distinct interpolations of his own—to have recourse to the published work of others for his plots. "The Lying Lover" is based upon "Le menteur" of Corneille; "The Tender Husband" owes not a little to Molière's "Le Sicilien; ou l'Amour Peintre," and the plot of "The Conscious Lovers" is discovered in Terence's "Andria." His originality lies not in theme, then, but in treatment.

Brilliant as was the work of the Restoration dramatists, it was scarcely uplifting, and, indeed, its blatant looseness of dialogue and situation finally evoked a shattering denunciation from Jeremy Collier, who in 1698 published his "Short View of the Profaneness and Immorality of the English Stage." Profoundly in agreement with Collier, Steele strove to inaugurate a new standard of decency in the theatre: much of his dialogue strikes the modern ear as excessively coarse, but it was only the current language of his day; and for the rest, he had the decided courage to break completely with the then prevalent custom of depicting vice as inconsequential—if not actually praiseworthy—pleasure, and to make happiness directly dependent upon virtue rather than self-indulgence and show that in the long run "honesty is the best policy." The outcome of Steele's ethical piety was artistic ruin. "The Lying Lover" was performed only six times, being—on Steele's own confession—"damned for its piety"; "The Tender Husband" was scarcely more successful and "The Conscious Lovers" exasperated Fielding into making Parson Adams describe it—not altogether unjustifiably since it develops at least in part into a virtual

## SIR RICHARD STEELE

treatise against the vicious custom of duelling—as being “as good as a sermon.” Yet overweighted as were Steele’s comedies with fixed moral intention, they contain not a few lines whose mirth is enduring. Who, for instance, could refrain from laughing at the following: “There is no will of a husband’s so willingly obeyed as his last” or “Why, really, sir, generally speaking, ’tis but knowing what a man thinks of himself and giving him that to make him what else you please”? No woman could ever fail to appreciate: “A fine lady’s clothes are not old by being worn, but by being seen”—nor, indeed, could any man who has to pay for them! Perusal of Steele’s comedies, however, forces us to the conclusion that it is not comedy, but the essay, which is his *métier*.

It was, indeed, by means of the essay that Steele most effectually served the theatre. He himself wrote in “The Tatler”: “It may possibly be imagined by severe men that I am too frequent in the mention of the theatrical representations, but who is not excessive in the discourse of what he extremely likes?” However that might be, Cibber has borne witness to the fact that Steele, by the influence of this same “Tatler,” excited the interest of the Town and filled the playhouses to overflowing. It was in recognition of the theatre’s debt to Steele that Cibber, Booth, Doggett and Wilks, actors and patentees of Drury Lane, offered him—at the beginning of George I’s reign—the position of co-partner or supervisor of Drury Lane, a position which he proudly accepted. Steele’s essays reveal considerable knowledge both of the literary and histrionic aspects of the drama. He is constructive in his criticism rather than destructive: scrupulously just in his judgments, denouncing where—as in the case of feared and hated opera—he feels denunciation to be absolutely necessary, he strives rather to unmask and bring to light unnoticed beauties than to carp at superficial shortcomings. He is quick to mark merit—whether in author or in actor—and generous in praising and encouraging it. All his critiques stress his insistence upon the prime necessity of strong characterization—one of the few

dramatic gifts he himself possessed—and breathe the nobility and height of his desire for the stage.

Steele was a tireless labourer in the interests of the drama, and his mantle is one that the present generation will do well to seize and make its own.

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

DEAR SIR,—I am unwilling to seem to cavil at Mr. Norman Marshall’s sympathetic review of my book “Scenes and Plays” in the July number of *DRAMA*, for I appreciate its friendliness to my aims as greatly as I admire Mr. Marshall’s own fine work for the theatre.

I feel I must, however, beg you to allow me to make a correction in a matter of facts. The plays in question are, admittedly, untheatrical: but I feel it does not follow from this that they are undramatic. Indeed, one of the objects of my book is to claim that work of such nature has a definite place in drama: and that drama is not a whole and complete thing in an age that excludes it.

I make this claim because I agree with Mr. Marshall that “the whole essence of drama is that it appeals to the eye as well as to the ear”—and because, although these plays might be described as dramatic poems rather than poetic dramas, they can only come fully to life and exhibit their nature in performance, and not by mere reading.

I welcome Mr. Marshall’s discerning observation that there is a future for poetic drama in the broadcasting studio: I have been waiting for some authoritative thinker in theatric matters to say so. But I believe poetic drama’s appeal is something beside an aural one; and in particular I shall be grateful if you will allow me to emphasise that my desire in any production of these plays is definitely to make the visual appeal also, and that they cannot produce the effect they intend unless they have the full aid of colour and costume and sensitive lighting. I do not include the aid of scenery also because the plays do not ask for realistic scenery or elaborate backgrounds. But I ask, none the less, for as much care for the visual effect of the background; as without them the other factors of the visual appeal can be stultified as completely in a large room as in a theatre.

Yours faithfully,

GORDON BOTTOMLEY

Lawnside, Great Malvern.

30th August, 1929.

On page 5 we have the pleasure of printing Mr. Gordon Bottomley’s “Prologue” which introduced some plays of his which were produced recently at Mr. John Masefield’s private theatre at Boar’s Hill, near Oxford. These plays are to be repeated, we understand, at the Rudolph Steiner Hall, London, on the 8th October.

Act 4. THE TENDER HUSBAND. Scene 4.



MISS POPE in the Character of *BIDDY TIPKIN*.  
*I'll be drawn thus if you please Sir.*

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# PROLOGUE

## To a Performance of Three Lyric Plays

BY GORDON BOTTOMLEY

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**I**N the beginning was the Word: then began man's thought.  
And the word is with God, by it He is still creating.  
The power that is in man's utterance man has lately forgot.  
Thought has denied the part that sound has in thought's shaping.

In the young years of the earth man desired to contemplate  
His defeats and victories, joys and agonies, beginning and ending:  
To act these on a stage was a holy ceremony, an aid  
To the worship of the Forces that maintain us, stricken or contented.

By this ennobling art man's bodily lovelinesses  
(That are uncontrolled accidents, either to inspire or hurt)  
Were seen, like those of the soul, to be every man's possession  
In the influence of the Word, and of movement born of the Word.

First in the Word, and last in the Word was their belief:  
Colour and form and tone were theirs, but in its service:  
Sound was theirs, but sound enriched by the texture of speech  
And, governed by ordered rhythm of speech, to music turning.

To such a lovely labour we would have dedicated  
Our days and selves, our passion and all we can achieve—  
To present honourable beings or shattered beings and degraded  
Seeming worthy alike in the enlargement brought by the deed.

But the ancient theatre of adoration and beauty revered,  
In which the fate of man was faced and borne and softened  
By watching its devout imitation, its law made clear,  
Is taken away from us who would serve it, and from our longing.

We and our kind have been homeless, we have not known what to do  
To bring to expression the impulses hidden in us by our fathers,  
Till a poet and master of power in his power, in the hour and mood  
Of creating, has seen a purpose for us: to the Word he has hearkened.

The Word is in him for guide. It is the living source  
Of the old august celebration which is despised and over:  
We assemble here in its name, he has unlocked and restored  
This house of the Word for us, new and yet not other.

Now to the old great art of the drama of moving speech,  
And of movement looking to speech for grace and divine intention,  
We address ourselves in your presence: in satisfying our need  
We would speak to a need in you for our ancient way with no ending.

# THE NORTHAMPTON REPERTORY PLAYERS

By Francis Graves

*[This article is of special interest in view of the Drama League Conference to be held at Northampton at the end of this month.—EDITOR.]*

THIS is the plain, unvarnished story of an attempt to plant the Repertory movement in a small industrial town in the Midlands, together with some suggestions to others who may be thinking of making the experiment under similar conditions elsewhere.

The town is Northampton, and its population round about a hundred thousand. As in most English provincial towns, the theatre has never played a big part in the lives of any number of people. It has always been just "an amusement." It has never been an entertainment, using the word in its proper and artistic sense.

But about three years ago Northampton was threatened with even the loss of such dramatic fare as it had had. An excellent variety theatre and a dozen picture houses had proved too keen competitors. In trying to meet the competition, the then proprietors of the theatre were staging fifth-rate melodrama, and nothing else. It was at this time that a few bold Northampton people conceived the idea of starting the Repertory movement. They entered into negotiation with the proprietors of the theatre, who very willingly discussed matters, and as during the time negotiations were taking place, an ordinary commercial Repertory company was meeting with some success with plays of a fairly good standard, the promoters of the Repertory movement were able to obtain enough money with which to make a start in January, 1927.

They signed a lease to take the theatre for two years, with the option of renewing it for a further two years.

They started with one great advantage over many similar efforts—they had an actual theatre, and not a converted chapel or a warehouse.

But they had two great disadvantages. The first was the necessity of playing twice nightly. There was no doubt in the minds of the directors, and never has been since, that this was essential. No

place of entertainment in Northampton is likely for a long time to come to meet with success unless it is twice nightly. This means, of course, that nearly all plays have to be cut, and that many plays which are eminently suitable for Repertory, cannot be given at all.

But it was a case of Hobson's choice, and, taking everything into consideration, experience has shown that it is not quite so severe a handicap as many people think. Anyhow, a great many very excellent plays have been given.

The other handicap is the smallness of the public who love the theatre, and the peculiar sensitiveness of Northampton people to any suspicion that they are "being educated." Time after time, plays have been put on which have displeased a certain section, and that section has shown disapproval by staying away next week, when a play they know quite well by reputation was given. This suspicious attitude is a far greater obstacle to success than the antagonism of the puritan, because when you have persuaded the puritan that the theatre is not evil you have generally made him a friend for life. But the man who gets into his head that you are trying to improve him, quite naturally, and, perhaps, quite rightly, resents it.

The first few months were extremely successful. In part this was because the venture was new—the people of Northampton are not unlike the people of Athens—and partly because it had been so long since Northampton had had a theatre at which the people might be certain to see a good play, well acted. Towards the end of the year, the audiences began to fall off. No doubt this was partly because the novelty had gone, but it was due also to some resentment. Two or three plays were put on which Northampton did not like. These plays were plays which, generally speaking, draw large houses in other parts of the country.

## THE NORTHAMPTON REPERTORY PLAYERS

In 1928 success varied. To a large extent there were two audiences. One, the smaller, which appreciated to the full the best that the Repertory company were giving them. This audience was not large enough. There was the other audience which was quite content with any play that gave them "a good laugh" with a fair amount of quiet weeping.

To cater exclusively for this audience would, of course, have been to defeat the very end of Repertory, and yet to do without them was impossible. To please both audiences could be done occasionally, but only very occasionally.

In the spring of this year it was found necessary temporarily to close down. Thanks to the generosity of a number of Northampton people the theatre was opened again in August, and another attempt is now being made to make Repertory a permanent feature of the entertainments at Northampton. One of the reasons for the lack of success—and this we would like to impress on everybody who is thinking of starting Repertory—is that we attempted to play fifty weeks of the year. This was a mistake. Had we closed for three months each summer, it is believed that the success would have been continuous, and that the public would have welcomed back Repertory each autumn after a holiday of three or four months. By the time this appears in print we shall know whether this is a fact or not, but we have every reason to believe that during the coming autumn the Repertory movement will be as successful as it was in its first few months.

Another grave, very practical, difficulty, has been the clash between those who think the artist the more important, and those who think the play. When a popular artist has left, a certain number of the audience have complained and stopped coming to the theatre. On the other hand, there are people, regular attendants at one time, who have ceased to come because they are tired of seeing the same artists week after week. It would be interesting to know if other Repertory companies have found this clash has had serious effects. Without any doubt at all, it was a very substantial reason for the falling-off of support at certain periods in the

history of the Northampton company.

But that is the blacker side. Even if the revival this autumn should be an unexpected failure, the company has awakened in Northampton among many hundreds of people a very real love of the theatre and of drama. For over two years Northampton has had plays of a higher standard than ever it has consistently had before.

Last summer, for instance, the company played "R. U. R." Three years ago the writer is confident that "R. U. R." would not have attracted five hundred people to the theatre in a week. It was played on summer nights last year to good, if not crowded, houses. The enthusiasm was intense.

The list of plays given by the company includes many of which no idealist would be ashamed. They have played "Anna Christie," "This Woman Business," "The Mask and the Face," "Mary Stuart," "Outward Bound," "The Ship," "The Skin Game," "Magic," "The Second Mrs. Tanqueray," "Windows," "The School for Scandal," and "A Bill of Divorcement," to name only a few. Most of these were successful financially, and every one of them gave intense pleasure to many hundreds of people whose sense of the theatre has been awakened.

No note about the Northampton theatre could omit the very magnificent work in production. During the past eighteen months the plays have been produced by Mr. H. M. Prentice, who was for some time producer at the Cambridge Festival Theatre. Visitors to the town who go to the theatre tell us that they have never seen plays so admirably produced as at Northampton, except, of course, in the big towns, and seldom there.

As for the company, two years' experience of the Repertory movement has taught those who took it in hand a great deal, but nothing has impressed them more than the devoted service of some of those players with whom they have been associated. While there remain such men and women so devoted to their art as these have been, so long will there remain an English theatre of which theatre-goers may be proud.

## BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE NOTES



THE JOURNAL OF

### THE BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE

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*Neither the Editor nor the Drama League as a whole accepts any responsibility for the opinions expressed in signed articles printed in this Journal.*

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**M**EMBERS of the League will have already received notice of the Autumn Conference to be held this year at Northampton. An unusually attractive programme has been arranged, and the addresses by Sir Barry Jackson and Professor Gilbert Murray, on Friday and Saturday, October 25th and 26th, are sure to attract large audiences. We are grateful for the co-operation of the Northamptonshire Federation of Women's Institutes whose plays, to be given on the Saturday evening, should encourage more of our rural members and affiliated societies to take part in the Conference than have joined us in previous years. The business Meeting of the Conference will also meet this year with a stronger sense of its validity, incorporated within the constitution of the League in accordance with the new rules which were passed at the Annual

Meeting last June. The Minutes of that meeting will be found in full on another page of this issue.

The death of M. Serge Diaghileff removes from the European theatre one of its most prominent figures. In the creation of his Russian Ballet Company, Diaghileff has written a chapter in the history of the dance which will never be forgotten. No one who knows anything of the inner history of that company during the past twenty years can over-estimate the part which he personally played in achieving the artistic excellence for which his troupe became so famous. His vitality was unflinching, and his latest production seen in London last summer. "The Prodigal Son," had never been surpassed in his earlier repertoire. Diaghileff was no mere showman, for to the tasks of organization and selection he brought the passion and understanding of a great artist.

Everyone will regret the announcement that Miss Lena Ashwell's "Once a Week Players" are, for the moment disbanded, and that therefore the weekly appearances of that company at suburban town halls will be discontinued. Thus ends, temporarily we hope, an enterprise which had its beginnings in the "Concerts at the Front" which Miss Ashwell organized in France and elsewhere during the war. The whole enterprise has been a piece of work of which Miss Ashwell may be justly proud, and which has done much to keep alive the idea of municipal drama in this country.

Unwilling that, as a result of the closing down of the Once a Week Players, weekly drama should altogether cease, the Public Amenities Committee of the Battersea Borough Council have approached the Drama League with the suggestion that various amateur societies near London might produce plays at Battersea on Tuesday evenings during the coming Autumn and Spring. A most interesting programme has been drawn up which will be sent to any applicant.

# RECENT BOOKS

Reviewed by Norman Marshall

- "Eurydice, or the Nature of Opera." By Dyneley Hussey. Kegan Paul. 2s. 6d.  
 "The New Spirit in the Russian Theatre." By Huntley Carter. Brentano. £1 10s.  
 "Jeremiah." By Stefan Zweig. Allen and Unwin. 10s. 6d.  
 "The Front Page." By Ben Hecht and Charles MacArthur. Cayne Press. 7s. 6d.  
 "Four Plays." By Philip Johnson. Benn. 10s. 6d.

**P**ERCHED on the top of this pile of rather bulky volumes, Mr. Dyneley Hussey's small and inexpensive book has a somewhat forlorn air. Yet it is easily the most important book on the list. It is not just a book for the opera-goer but most emphatically a book for everybody who is intelligently interested in the theatre. One of the reasons for the feeble condition of opera in England at present is that it is not yet regarded as a serious part of the so-called "art of the theatre." It is dismissed as a bastard form of art, too artificial to be treated seriously apart from the music. The result is that opera audiences are quite content with staging and production of a kind which they would not tolerate for a moment in the ordinary theatre. Abroad, on the other hand, it is the opera houses which have provided many of the leading producers and designers with their finest opportunities. The argument of the opening chapter of Mr. Hussey's book is that opera is in itself a complete art-form, "not a mere mixture of two substances which remain separate and distinguishable, but, to use the chemical term, a compound of them, unique in itself and distinct from its two elements." He goes on to urge that artificiality of opera must be accepted not as a disadvantage but as a positive quality. The moment seems particularly favourable for a better understanding of opera, as in the ordinary theatre there is a decided reaction against endless realism and a desire to accept and use the conventions and artificialities of the stage far more frankly, instead of elaborately pretending that they do not exist. Anyway, here is a book written with an extremely sound "sense of the theatre" which states the case for opera as a serious art-form swiftly, pithily and most readably.

By contrast Mr. Huntley Carter's book seems to lumber along somewhat heavily. It contains an enormous amount of extremely valuable material, but it is presented to the reader still too much in its raw state, without sufficient selection and arrangement. Nor is Mr. Huntley Carter a particularly persuasive writer. In the preface he assures us that his qualifications for his task include "a long experience of all sides of the Theatre, its theory and practice in this country and abroad, together with a very wide experience of human life in its many and varied aspects, philosophical, moral religious, scientific, æsthetic, political, economic, social and so on." Nevertheless, one feels that this would have been a better book if the author had tempered his enthusiasm for the Russian theatre as "an up-to-date tool of expression for all" with a little more

sober critical judgment on its artistic merits. There are over thirty excellent full-page illustrations, and even if one finds it difficult to accept the author's opinions one cannot but be grateful to him for the mass of facts and figures he has collected.

Stefan Zweig's "Jeremiah" is an anti-war play written in 1915 when the only way left open for the expression of such a point of view was that of symbolism and historical allegory. "Amid the rage of battle, amid the clamour of the phrase makers, amid the volley-fire of false news, I turned my attention inwards, formed a present out of the past, translated the present back into the past." In its present form the play is much too long and wordy, and it suffers from a certain monotony of mood and incident. But it would be easy enough to prune it down for production and the task would probably be worth while as there are many scenes handled with a superbly flamboyant sense of the theatre, especially those in which the Crowd appear. In fact, the chief character in the play is the Crowd rather than Jeremiah. It is all to the good of the English theatre that a play such as this should be translated and published, even if it never reaches the stage. "The Front Page" provides another useful object lesson to our own playwrights. In this country we pride ourselves on our realistic plays, but our realism is a tame, dispirited thing beside the realism of "The Front Page." It is, at first sight, a sordid enough sort of realism with a squalid newspaper office as its setting, but as the play continues it becomes clear that this is the kind of realism which arises from a tremendous zest and relish for life in the raw. The gusto with which the play is written is infectious and exciting. In the theatre it should provide as stirring an evening's entertainment as anyone could desire.

With Mr. Philip Johnson's book we return to one of the traditional lines of English play-writing. All the five plays in the book leave one feeling unsatisfied. The reason is that the author knows how to say a thing much better than he knows how to find something to say. His sense of the stage is unerring, and he can write the kind of dialogue which always keeps one wanting to know what is going to be said next. It was this which made me read every line of the full-length play which begins the book in spite of the fact that I was quite uninterested in either the characters or the story. It was not even because the lines were in themselves occasionally striking or memorable. It was simply that the author has that power possessed by born actors and born playwrights of always making one feel that one dare not relax one's attention because at any moment something really important may be going to happen. Unfortunately in Mr. Johnson's plays nothing quite important enough ever does happen. Yet in spite of that these plays are such unflinching good "theatre" that they could be relied upon to hold their audiences relentlessly until the fall of the curtain. It is a book well worth reading, whether or not one is in search of a good one-acter.

# THE NATIONAL FESTIVAL OF COMMUNITY DRAMA

By Cyril Wood

THREE years ago many of us expressed doubts. Few regarded the Festival as anything more than a doubtful sideline of the League's activities, and some even went so far as to predict that the Festival would "split" the League. Our pessimism was unjustified. Not only has the Festival steadily progressed from year to year, but it has reached a position of considerable importance in the League's programme. To those who objected that the Festival seemed to encourage the competitive spirit, there is a significant answer contained in the Western Area report below.

If the Festival set out merely to discover, by an eliminating process, the most competent dramatic society in Great Britain, its value would be negligible. But it has become increasingly clear that its real value lies in the opportunity it provides for amateur work to receive expert and impartial criticism. Area and Divisional Committees now making their plans for the forthcoming Festival would do well to give this matter their most serious consideration. If the Festival is to gain in importance and to claim respect it must be able to offer assurance to participating Societies that the criticism they will receive will be expert, constructive, and, at the same time, firm—also, I suggest, written.

The following Reports show increased activity all round. Although there will be one representative from each Area appearing in the National Final Festival in London the new system of allowing an additional team from the Area having the largest number of entries will certainly add piquancy, as well as fairer representation, to this year's Festival.

## NORTHERN AREA

(Hon. Sec., J. Hirst, 7 Blackfriars Street, Manchester).

The result of the merging of the former North-Eastern and North-Western Areas under the heading of the Northern Area, has been the formation of The Northern Community Drama Association. For purposes of convenience in organization, the Area has been divided into eight divisions. Of these, the Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester, Lancaster and Newcastle Divisions have held inaugural meetings, and have appointed officers.

Of the remaining three Divisions, some difficulty is being experienced in forming the Sheffield Division owing to unfortunate financial experience of some of the Societies entering for the Festival in that district last year. It is hoped, however, that this difficulty will be overcome. In the Penrith and in the North Wales Divisions there has also been no success up to the present, as nobody can be found to call the initial meeting. [*It is hoped that the revelation of this fact will result in volunteers coming forward.*—Ed.]

It is unfortunate that the preliminary work in connection with the Festival has to be commenced in the summer. Many societies practically disband in the summer months, and their interest in Drama only reawakens in September. It is not surprising, therefore, that the number of societies who have joined the new Association up to now is comparatively small. Under the circumstances it is as large as could be expected, but a big increase is expected during September and October. The most gratifying feature is the keen interest shown in the Newcastle district which has hitherto taken no part in the Festival.

## EASTERN AREA

(Hon. Sec., G. Williams, 15-16 Aldermanbury, London, E.C.2).

The Eastern Area Committee has set itself the task of at least doubling the number of entries from its twenty-one counties. There is ample room for increase, this Area, with London at its heart, containing more amateur dramatic groups than any other.

The Area has been divided into four divisions, each with its own Divisional Committee of representatives from the various counties. The individual members of these Committees are being asked by the Area Secretary to approach, *personally*, societies in their districts. It is felt that "personal approach" is the secret of success in making known the value of the Festival and of increasing the number of local Festivals. The Committee wishes to stress the value to societies entering in this Area of the Adjudicator's Reports—a written criticism, showing marks, will be sent to each society after the local Festival. It is expected that an Area Final will be held in London in March, and for this one team will be chosen from each of the four divisions. For the information of entrants, it should be noted that the Preliminary (or Local) Festivals will be held during January and February. *Entry Forms must reach the Honorary Secretary (who will be pleased to answer any enquiries) not later than November 16.*

## WESTERN AREA

(Hon. Sec., C. M. Haines, 1 Alexandra Road, Clifton, Bristol).

Good progress has been made with the preliminary organisation in this Area, which has been divided into five divisions with centres at Birming-



## THE NATIONAL FESTIVAL OF COMMUNITY DRAMA

ham, Bristol, Bournemouth, Exeter, and South Wales.

The size of the Area makes the concentration of finalists into a single Area Festival impracticable. In its place five Divisional Festivals will be held, at the five centres named above, and from the twenty odd plays there presented the Judge appointed by the B.D.L. will choose one (or perhaps two!) to appear in London. At each Divisional Festival he will also present one Diploma of Merit.

The five divisions are thus practically independent, and the Committee in each division is responsible for its own organisation, under the general supervision of the Area Committee. In all five divisions arrangements are well in hand. Although the Festival is only a year old in South Wales, prospects here are particularly bright. It is hoped to organise a single Preliminary Festival lasting several days. The effect of the Festival here has been most salutary, because it is tending to take the place, and reduce the importance, of local dramatic competitions, and thus to substitute the non-competitive Festival for enterprises in which the competitive spirit is almost excessively strong. Here, as elsewhere, the missionary services of the Festival, both to the B.D.L. and to the amateur movement in general, are great and increasing.

Names and addresses of divisional and local Secretaries can be obtained from the Area Secretary (address above).

### SCOTTISH AREA

(Hon. Sec., D. Campbell Buchan, 13 Alva Street, Edinburgh).

The Scottish rules are at present in course of being completely recast, more detailed regulations being added as to the stage arrangements at Festival performances. While the Scottish Association has every reason to expect a still further increased number of entries, they are also planning propaganda in the more outlying districts. Trophies in the form of cups have been presented by the Outlook Tower, Edinburgh for the best team in the South-East Sub-Area, and by the "Glasgow Herald" newspaper for the best team in the South-West Sub-Area. The spontaneous offers of these cups have been most gratifying to the Association. Sir James Barrie has been re-elected President of the Association.

The note of optimism in these Reports must not be taken as a sign that effort is not required. Area Secretaries will welcome co-operation, and for this purpose their names and addresses are published. *It is particularly desired that the Festival shall be made known to non-members of the British Drama League.*

The Editor hopes that it may be possible to reserve each month at least one page of DRAMA for Festival news. The page is intended more for the purpose of pooling experience and suggestions than for giving items merely of local interest.

## THE CANTERBURY FESTIVAL

By John Hampden

AMATEUR drama and amateur music contributed much to the success of the Canterbury Cathedral Festival of Music and Drama (August 19-24), under the able leadership of Mr. Adrian Boulton and Mr. Nugent Monck, and the Norwich Players are certainly to be congratulated upon their productions, as packed and quiet audiences testified. "Everyman" was staged under the towering beauty of the west front, from the height of which came the Voice of God. The rostrum, with a small central dais, was backed by grey curtains, and to this admirably simple setting the right medieval note of colour was brought by the bright dresses of the players and the Kentish Folk Dancers.

"Dr. Faustus" was acted in the Chapter House, with an inner and outer stage, Elizabethan fashion, which made continuous playing possible, and here there was a Renaissance richness in the coloured arras, with the great stained-glass window above, and the coloured lighting. In both plays the absence of a proscenium made for intimacy and conviction, and in both the setting and production were definitely better than the acting. "Everyman" was the more completely successful, for Everyman himself gave an admirable performance, nervous and sensitive, and the team-work of the minor parts was uniformly good. Dr. Faustus never quite rose to the height of his great argument—perhaps only an actor of genius could—but both he and Mephistopheles rendered thoughtful interpretations, and again good team-work did much to make the production memorable and impressive. Both plays caught the spirit of the time and the place.

Perhaps the greatest thing, however, is that English drama has been received back into its birthplace, the English church, where amateur actors brought it into being. It is to be hoped that this will become an annual festival—and there are many Cathedrals in England besides Canterbury.

# GLOUCESTERSHIRE DRAMA

By Edward J. Lewis

**G**LOUCESTERSHIRE is one of the most highly favoured of all English counties. It guards the incomparable treasure of the Cotswold Hills. It is a storehouse of archaeological relics and historical memories. It boasts of a domestic architecture without rival. It is the retreat of many "arts and crafts" which, in the midst of modern mechanism and standardization, witness to a lovely day that is dead. And now, in this charming volume by Theodore Hannam-Clark,\* we learn that its dramatic history is as vital and as interesting as everything else in it.

Richard, Duke of Gloucester, was the first royal patron of the drama in England. Shakespeare made liberal use of the county for scenes (in Richard the Second and Henry the Fourth, for example), and characters (Justice Shallow, for instance) in his plays; and there are grounds for believing that, as a member of the Earl of Leicester's company, he may have played the Ghost, or Adam, in the city of Gloucester. The parents of the famous Kemble family were married at Cirencester; it was in Gloucester that John Philip Kemble and his company played "All for Love" with only one ruffle between them, and he himself in a borrowed shirt, being unable to redeem his own from his landlady; and Mrs. Siddons, his sister, was well known to Cheltenham playgoers before she blazed forth at Covent Garden as one of the fixed stars in the dramatic firmament. Edmund Kean, and the clown, Grimaldi, climbed also to the stars, and the foot of the ladder was in Gloucestershire.

The familiar story of the rise of the drama through mystery plays, miracles, moralities, and the like is traced by Mr. Hannam-Clark in his unassuming and careful way from the interesting, and often amusing, records of the county. And the full account he gives of its modern dramatic

activities, both professional and amateur, shows how faithfully the long tradition is kept. With Gloucestershire, rather than with his birthplace just across the border, the name of John Masefield will always be linked, because of his "Tragedy of Nan." John Drinkwater, who lived for some time in the county, partly repaid its pleasant hospitality by his "Bird in Hand" which everybody has seen and loved. Our local theatres have not perhaps quite retained their former glory; but we are ready to back our village players at Oakridge and Painswick, and others too for that matter, against the best.

In 1581, the City Chamberlain of Gloucester paid twenty shillings to "Her Majesty's Poppette players"; they must have been pretty good at that figure; but not quite so good as those which Mr. Simmonds, the well-known sculptor at Oakridge, has made and often shows to entertain his lucky friends.

In almost every English county there must be a pleasant history of the drama waiting to be revealed; and to those who have the necessary opportunities and enthusiasm we commend the excellent example of Theodore Hannam-Clark.

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## ICELAND'S NEW THEATRE

The National Theatre at Reykjavik is to be ready for the ensuing festival to be held next year in celebration of Iceland's millenary. Mr. Jean Hansen, the builder, declares it will be the most modern in the world. Among its up-to-date features will be a bridge for horizontal lighting, a lighting system in four colours, a revolving stage, a heating and ventilating system and stringent safety arrangements.

There will be accommodation for an orchestra of forty, rooms for the musicians, tailoring and joinery shops, foyer, restaurant, rooms for rehearsals, and offices for the director and other officials. The theatre is situated in an open square in the centre of the town. Iceland, according to the "Monitor," produces talented playwrights and gifted actors. One of these, Mlle. Anna Borg, has appeared with success at the Royal State Theatre, Copenhagen.

W. K. S.

\* "Drama in Gloucester," by T. Hannam-Clark. Simpkin Marshall. 5s. net.



SCENE FROM ALFRED DE MUSSET'S  
"NO TRIFLING WITH LOVE," AS PRO-  
DUCED BY THE HOLYWELL PLAYERS  
AT THE RUDOLPH STEINER HALL,  
MAY 13, 1929, AND TO BE REVIVED ON  
THE EVENING OF TUESDAY, OCTOBER  
8TH, AT THE BATTERSEA TOWN HALL



THE MUNICIPAL THEATRE AT DIJON.  
BUILT IN 1810 FROM THE DESIGN BY  
D'YONNAIS CELLERIER

# MINUTES OF THE TENTH ANNUAL MEETING OF THE DRAMA LEAGUE

Held on Friday, June 30th, at 2.30 p.m., at 8 Adelphi Terrace

Mr. W. Lee Mathews in the Chair

*Minutes.*—The Minutes of the last meeting, which had been circulated, in the October, 1928, number of *DRAMA*, were taken as read and signed.

*Annual Report and Balance Sheet.*—Mr. Whitworth outlined the principal points in the Annual Report, which had been printed in the June *DRAMA*. He drew attention to the Third National Festival of Community Drama which had been held with increased success, and he explained the reasons for the re-organization of the Areas, which was being undertaken next year.

The autumn Conference had been held at Sheffield by the kindness of Miss Radford and the Sheffield Playgoers, and one of the results of the deliberations at that Conference had been the re-drafting of the rules of the League, a matter for discussion later on in the meeting. He also drew attention to the work of the Junior Drama Committee and the London Elementary Festival, organized by Mr. Edward Lewis, to whom a special vote of thanks should be given.

Dealing with the Library in Dr. Boas' absence, Mr. Whitworth read some of the statistics of the books and sets borrowed during the year which showed a remarkable increase. It was obvious that the Library service was proving of greater benefit every year.

The Chairman, before calling on Mr. Rea to bring forward the balance sheet, said that he would like to pay a special tribute to Mr. Rea for his great help in acting as Hon. Treasurer. Such help and interest as Mr. Rea always gave were heartily appreciated.

Mr. Rea, in speaking on the Statement of Accounts, compared the figures with those of last year. He pointed out that the balance on May 31, 1929, was only £312 compared with £992 on the same date last year. This was owing to the cessation of the grant of £750 from the Carnegie Trust who, in accordance with their policy, would not subsidise organizations indefinitely, but only on the chance of their being self-supporting. They had promised, however, to guarantee the League against loss during the next three years, but anything like the grant which had previously been given would not be forthcoming. Mr. Rea also drew attention of members to the increase in the amount paid in salaries. The staff now numbered thirteen, and an easy calculation would show the very conservative scale on which salaries were paid. The Bookshop showed a profit of £92 against a loss of £125 last year. This was satisfactory so far as it went, but Mr. Rea urged members to give greater publicity to this service, so that the Bookshop might be more profitable. He added that the stock in hand amounted to £329. The other items in the balance sheet did not call for special mention.

He strongly urged all those present to do their best to increase the League's membership.

In seconding the adoption of the Report, Mr.

Holford Knight testified to the splendid work achieved by Mr. Whitworth, and he stated he thought the movement one of the most important in our national life. He considered the Report extremely satisfactory and he hoped that the League would prove of increasing utility.

Mr. Sharman pointed out that the number of resignations seemed rather high. Mr. Whitworth replied that enquiries from similar organizations showed that the annual lapse of about ten per cent. of the membership was not unusual. It must be remembered that a certain number of people joined the League for some specific purpose, such as the criticism of a play, and resigned when their object had been attained.

Mr. Lee Mathews proposed, Mr. Holford Knight seconded, and it was

*Resolved:* "That the Annual Report and Balance Sheet should be adopted."

*Election of Council.*—It was proposed by the Chairman and

*Resolved:* "That Lord Lytton and Mr. Bishop, who had been co-opted during the year, should now be elected as members of the Council."

It was reported that in accordance with the rules of the League, the following members of the Council were due to retire annually, but were eligible for re-election:

Miss Edith Craig,  
Mrs. A. C. Crichton,  
Mr. W. A. Darlington,  
Miss Mary Kelly,  
Mr. Holford Knight,  
The Hon. Mrs. Alfred Lyttelton,  
Dr. L. du Garde Peach,  
Mr. C. Harold Ridge.

It was proposed by Mr. Whitworth, seconded by Miss Fogerty and

*Resolved:* "That these members should be elected."

It was further reported that certain members of the Council had not attended meetings during the year and were consequently due for retirement. It was, however, proposed to re-elect the following:

Lieut.-Col. C. Headlam,  
Mr. Albert Rutherford.

This was agreed.

*Election of Auditors.*—It was proposed by Miss Fogerty, seconded by Mr. Sharman, and

*Resolved:* "That Messrs. Searle, Honeybourne and Co. should be re-elected auditors for the coming year."

*Revision of the Rules of the League.*—Mr. Whitworth explained that as a result of a resolution passed at the Sheffield Conference it had been decided to revise the rules of the League. Copies of the old rules with the proposed alterations were in the hands of every member.

## TENTH ANNUAL MEETING MINUTES

The Chairman moved, and Mr. Holford Knight seconded,

"That the alterations should be adopted."

Mr. Hannam-Clark, who earlier in the meeting asked leave to bring the matter forward, made three queries:

1. Could the country representation on the Council be brought into action immediately?

2. Was the proportion of country representatives adequate?

3. What were the divisions suggested?

An opportunity was given for these points to be taken up by other members, but in default of this, the Chairman explained:

1. That it would be out of order to forestall the arrangements for the nomination and election of councillors under the new scheme. This would automatically come into operation in June, 1930.

2. After very careful consideration the Council had come to the conclusion that while the number of Councillors elected at the Annual General Meeting was to be actually reduced, it was very desirable to retain a solid nucleus of councillors so elected, and this particularly as it was still open for any member to nominate councillors under this heading, as well as under the new scheme.

3. Mr. Whitworth said that the division of the country had already been considered, and the following ten divisions had been made, so far as possible in accordance with the number of affiliated societies and members in each:

- i. Scotland.
- ii. Northumberland, Cumberland, Westmorland, Lancashire, Isle of Man.
- iii. Yorkshire, Durham.
- iv. Hereford, Cheshire, Salop, Staffs, Derby, Notts, Leics., Rutland.
- v. Wales.
- vi. Worcs., Warwick, Berks, Oxon, Northants, Beds.
- vii. Lincs., Norfolk, Suffolk, Herts, Hunts, Cambs., Bucks.
- viii. E. Sussex, Kent, Essex.
- ix. W. Sussex, Surrey, Hants, Isle of Wight.
- x. Cornwall, Devon, Somerset, Dorset, Wilts, Glos.

In the further discussion, Mr. Dingwall suggested that the word "organization" should not be used. It was decided to employ a better term if one could be found to embrace all the bodies affiliated to the League. Mr. Hannam-Clark pointed out that in the revised rules the amount of the subscription of affiliated societies was not stated.

The resolution was finally passed subject to alterations in phraseology being made according to the suggestions of Mr. Dingwall and Mr. Hannam-Clark.

**Other Business.**—The Chairman moved, and it was unanimously resolved:

"That a hearty vote of thanks should be given to Mr. Whitworth for his untiring work for the League. Also to Miss Briggs, Miss Coates, Miss Garnham, Mrs. Kent and the other members of the Staff."

Mr. Whitworth, in reply, thanked all those present on behalf of the Staff.  
The meeting then closed.

## SHAKESPEAREANIZED SHAW

By Vernon H. PORTER

THERE has been some little vogue in presenting the Shakespearean plays in modern dress. It was found that this method enabled an audience the more easily to discover how much of his work was for an age and how much for all time. There seems very good reason to suppose that the reverse method applied to contemporary dramatists would have the same result. Why not present Shaw's plays in Shakespearean costume? Would it not reveal how much of his work is that of an artist and how much of the pamphleteer or propagandist?

Many modern plays would be ineligible for this treatment because their protagonists are drawn from the poorer classes and so are fundamentally un-Elizabethan. But there is no particular reason why "Man and Superman" should not be dressed in costume of that period, and it would enable us to judge whether Shaw's anti-romantic theory that a woman is the pursuer in the sex game is as novel as it is supposed to be.

One of the most suitable plays for Shakespeareanisation is "Heartbreak House." Its *dramatis personæ* are of sufficiently high social status to become Elizabethan gentry, or even at a stretch, nobles. Anyone can see with half an eye that Capt. Shotover is the Shakespearean fool in modern dress—regarded by the other characters as mad, but actually the wisest man amongst them. Randall the Rotter is the booby of "Bartholomew Fair," and his flute would provide an occasion for a couple of lyrics from the musician's gallery. With but little poetic (or adaptor's) licence, Hector's change into Moorish costume might be replaced by the disguise of Ellie Dunn in male attire. It should not be difficult to find the Elizabethan equivalent of Boss Mangan's commercial morality. Mazzini Dunn and the Hushabye Sisters would fit easily into the picture. The burglar would be threatened with death instead of ten years' hard, and sundry other small changes would be necessary. The ingenuity of the producer would be exercised in Elizabethanising the aeroplane climax, but it is such little problems that make producing worth while.

The whole play is ripe for romantic treatment; and doubtless Mr. Shaw would be pleased to rewrite it in blank verse, finding it no more trouble than "The Admirable Bashville." With the play thus presented, we might find that "Heartbreak House" and "Horseback Hall" flourished in Shakespeare's day and were not the product of the immediately pre-war years.

On Tuesday, July 23, and up to the following Saturday, the Second Part of King Henry VI was played in the open air by boys of the Lower School of Weymouth College. The average age of the performers was below 15, and a feature of the show was that every boy had to make his own shield, helmet and weapon. The play had a very favourable reception and thoroughly deserved it.



# NEWS FROM NORTH AND SOUTH

## BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE HOLIDAY SCHOOLS AT FAIRLIGHT, ST. ANDREWS AND TAVISTOCK

For all three of these Schools the League was financially responsible, and at the first two Miss Margaret Macnamara was organising director. Tavistock owed its inception and organization to the Village Drama Society and was managed by Miss Mary Kelly. Lectures were given by both the directors; also, at Fairlight, by Mr. Val Gielgud, Mr. Mordaunt Shairp, Mr. Geoffrey Whitworth and Mr. Harcourt Williams; at Tavistock, by Miss Isabel Chisman, specialist in period dancing; at St. Andrews, by Miss Enid Maxwell, who took classes in voice production, and Mr. Tyrone Guthrie.

St. Andrews was from all points of view, a brilliant event; thanks, in large measure to the local Hon. Sec., and her friends, to the two kind and clever representatives of the Council of the Scottish Community Drama Association, and to the genial Chairman of the Drama Committee of the Scottish Rural Women's Institutes.

All three Schools were highly successful in the main object of such gatherings. Amateurs of widely diverse experience were brought into stimulating comradeship, presented with new ideas, shewn the mechanism of the art of production, and sent home with new courage and new or renewed conviction that the keenest joys of the theatre are attainable only at the price of hard and humble and unselfish work.

Performances at Fairlight and St. Andrews were semi-private, and almost everything wanted for the stage—including arduous labour—was supplied by the students. In the Third Act of "The Good Hope" most of the costumes were lent by Miss Edith Craig, and she drove her team of amateurs with so sure an estimate of their capabilities that the spectators, though they saw but one scene, were gripped and deeply moved. The translator, Miss Christopher St. John, declared that she had never witnessed a performance that was more essentially right in its simple directness and sincerity at St. Andrews.

By methods quite different from Miss Craig's, but with a similar intuitive gift, trained by life-long experience, Mr. W. G. Fay, guided one cast towards an enjoyable performance of "Mrs. Adis," and jolled another through a spirited tackling of "Spreading the News."

At Tavistock Mrs. Mabel Gibson concentrated on diction (her special subject) the acting of "Scenes from St. Joan" and "The Bourgeois Gentleman." The casts were very happy in their parts, but the public performances drew thin houses. There as elsewhere, however, Goodbyes were said amid a chorus of petitions for "Another School next year!"

## SCALA THEATRE

A successful matinee of the "Lilies of the Field" was given at the Scala Theatre on Wednesday, July 10, before a large audience of distinguished patrons in aid of the Model Humane Abattoir at Letchworth, on behalf of which the Duchess of Hamilton made a stirring appeal during the first entr'acte. The performance, in fact, was given by the members of the Douglas-Hamilton family and their friends. In spite of its length the piece ran swiftly and smoothly, thanks to the careful oversight of the producer, Miss Mary Raby.

Rhythm in acting is as easy to lose as rhythm in rowing when anything like pace is attempted. The only exception was the final curtain. The two twins, Catherine and Elizabeth were played by Lady Margaret Douglas Hamilton and Miss Maydée Mackay with refreshing verve. Miss Mackay's mock impersonation of the early Victorian girl was marked with just the necessary restraint to prevent the character falling into the pitfall of farce. Miss Betty Power, as the grandmother, showed an infinity of resource, and, unlike most amateurs, she was made up to look every inch her age, as did also Mr. Malcolm Brereton, who, in what might be described as a twentieth-century incarnation of the Vicar of Wakefield, gave a very dignified rendering of that somewhat arduous role.

C. B.

## CLIFTON ARTS CLUB DRAMATIC CONTEST

Great interest will be aroused by the Dramatic Contest for original short plays which is being promoted this winter by the Clifton Arts Club, Bristol. This contest is held annually, and is believed to be the only one of its kind in the world; its special and unique feature is that original plays are judged not merely in manuscript but in actual stage performance, the final Judge's estimate being formed solely by the success of each play in the only proper medium of a play, the theatre.

The contest is open, and of the plays sent in six will be chosen to contest the final stage, and these will be produced by the Club in Bristol in March, 1930; so that, in addition to the offer of two cash prizes, no fewer than six authors will obtain the privilege of having their plays produced. When it is remembered that in most play-writing competitions the sole prize is an offer to produce the one winning play, the exceptional scope of this offer will be appreciated. The Club are anxious to make the contest known as widely as possible, since they believe that it offers a unique opportunity to many playwrights to get their work actually on the stage. The closing date for the receipt of plays is January 1, 1930, and full rules, together with all particulars, can be obtained from Mr. C. M. Haines (Hon. Sec., Dramatic Section, Clifton Arts Club), 1 Alexandra Road, Clifton, Bristol.

## NEWS FROM NORTH AND SOUTH

### EXPERIMENTAL GROUP LONDON SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS

Producers (even readers of *DRAMA* will admit) do sometimes get in the way. But if ever a producer achieved his rightful function of "interpreting" a play, without distracting his audience's attention by insistence on his own personal foibles or mannerism, then Mr. Gibson-Cowan did this in his presentation of *Masses and Man*.

It would seem irrelevant to praise this or that individual actor in the production. What one was conscious of—and what one remembers—was the entirely adequate acting of a *team*. Groupings, stage pictures, stick in one's mind rather than particular individual achievements: the silhouetted crowd of workers against the red background in Scene 3, and their really beautiful "machine" movements; the finish of Scene 1, with the lights dying down as the Woman's voice faded away; the intensely dramatic "hold-up" of the workers' committee by the troops; the simplicity of the last scene—the two protagonists, Woman and Nameless, face to face on either side of the red table; these are the pictures that stand out in one's mind as one looks back at the performance.

They were planned and realized by a stage designer of first-rate quality. Gibson-Cowan is to be congratulated.

J. F. HORRABIN, M.P.

### A NOVEL PLAY RECITAL

On July 9 in the Drama League Club Room at 8, Adelphi Terrace, Miss Eva Saunderson delighted a small company of listeners by her solo rendering of "The Skin Game." Miss Saunderson has developed a method of dramatic recitation which is new to me. Having memorized the play—she proceeds to recite it, but with the interpolation of such verbal comments as may enable her hearers to visualize the scene in its entirety. As the play progresses, these comments become less and less, and it is astonishing how clearly the whole play lives before one.

Frankly, at least one member of Miss Saunderson's audience expected to be a little tired before the end. But this was far from being the case and it must be admitted that in some respects the meaning of the play was even clearer than it appears from a stage representation.

It seems that by engaging the services of a Miss Saunderson, hesitating managers might be enabled to test the dramatic possibilities of a play without actually seeing it performed. The advantages of such a facility must be manifest.

G. A. W.

### LYCEUM CLUB

An interesting afternoon was given at the Lyceum Club, Piccadilly, when five one-act plays were produced, all written by members. A one-act play, "Meryon," by Alice Law, provided an excellent little sketch on the circumstances attending the death of the great French etcher.

The author has deposited the MS. of the play in the Library of the League, and we can recommend it for perusal by those who desire a one-act play giving plenty of scope for a small company of actors.

### EXETER

When Mr. Richard Twiss was travelling in Spain in the spring of 1773, he found the theatre at Valencia closed because "as it had not rained for some months, a stop was put to all public diversions." This unexpected interdependence of Drama and Rainfall may account for the prevalence of both in Exeter.

In spite of a good local theatre and plenty of first-rate charity performances the Exeter Drama League has had excellent audiences for its five productions. Two performances have been given of each play at prices from 1s. to 1s. 9d.

On one occasion the Topsham Amateur Dramatic Society as our guests gave Milne's charming comedy "To have the Honour." The other four were "The Eternal Spring" (Peter Garland), "The Doctor's Dilemma" (G. B. Shaw), "The Ship" (St. John Ervine), "Mary Stuart" (John Drinkwater). In addition we entered two one-act plays for the National Executive, "The Saint's Comedy," F. Sladen Smith, and "Crabbed Youth and Age" (Lennox Robinson). Of these the latter won the sub-area competition and took part in the Area Festival at Bristol.

Judged by receipts our most popular productions were "Mary Stuart" and "The Doctor's Dilemma."

C. R.

### WATFORD SCHOOL OF MUSIC DRAMATIC SOCIETY

A delightful performance of "The Red Umbrella" by Brenda Girvin and Monica Cosens, was given by the Watford School of Music Dramatic Society at St. John's Hall, Watford, on Monday, March 11, 1929.

The characters were well represented, and the play was given with spirit and understanding, especially so in the case of the female persons presented.

With the male actors there was a certain hesitation in getting a "grip" of the characters straight off, they seemed rather to come on as themselves and gradually slip into their parts so that the end of their performance was remarkably better than the beginning. This might be due to nervousness or a touch of self-consciousness, but is a fault which should be easily remedied. Miss Rose Lloyd-King is to be congratulated on the success of her production.

### "ON APPROVAL": MAIDSTONE DRAMATIC SOCIETY

The recent production by this Society of Frederick Lonsdale's most brilliant *tour de foilie* well illustrates the pitfall (frequently commented upon of late) of following in West End footsteps. Only the rare possession of four actors of consummate polish can justify this particular choice, and the result here was not too happy. The producer should remember that all movements must be purposeful. The whole production suffered from a restlessness which is not synonymous with speed. The Society is a large one, and has produced some ten or twelve plays during its four years of existence. A greater originality and discretion in choice of play will probably give quite different results.

J. S.

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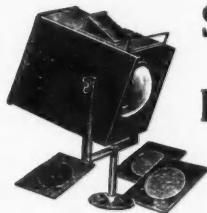
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